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Implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the plan of action of the United Nations Forum on Forests: progress in implementation

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

Monitoring, assessment and reporting, including concepts, terminology and definitions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Monitoring, assessment and reporting is one of the principal functions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. As outlined by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2000/35 and the report of the Forum on its first session (E/2001/42/Rev.1), the Forum would need to monitor and assess progress in the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action and progress towards sustainable forest management, as well as review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. At the same time, the Forum would need to advance the work identified in the IPF/IFF proposals for action as regards the streamlining of reporting requirements: the achievement of a common understanding of concepts, terminology and definitions; the development and implementation of criteria and indicators; the enhancement of global and national forest assessments and databases; and the building of capacity for collection, analysis and dissemination of data. Member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have a major role to play in carrying out and supporting the Forum's work in this regard.

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The present report gives an overview of progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including concepts, terminology and definitions, which is an element for deliberation at the second session of the Forum. Furthermore, the report examines the three areas of monitoring, assessment and reporting within the mandate of the Forum (i.e., progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests and review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests). The report proposes (a) options for developing a mechanism for the Forum to monitor and assess progress, mainly through reporting by countries and organizations by, as far as possible, using existing reporting structures, data and information; (b) criteria against which the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests would be reviewed; and (c) some future actions that the Forum may wish to consider regarding monitoring, assessment and reporting. These actions are for consideration by countries at the second session as well as by the ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting, which will be established at the session.

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I. Introduction

1. Monitoring, assessment and reporting is one of the principal functions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. When the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35 of 18 October 2000, established the Forum in October 2000, it decided that the international arrangement on forests would, among other things, monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and on that basis consider future actions needed.

2. According to the multi-year programme of work of the Forum,[1] the monitoring, assessment and reporting function comprises the following three areas:

Area 1: Progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action;

Area 2: Progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests;

Area 3: Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

3. At its first session, the Forum invited countries, regions, organizations and processes to report to the Forum, on a voluntary basis, on their progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. With regard to progress towards sustainable forest management, the Forum stressed the importance of using the framework of criteria and indicators as a basis for reporting.

4. At the same session, the Forum recognized the need to identify and agree on, if possible at the second session, the criteria against which the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests would be reviewed in a systematic and objective manner.

5. The multi-year programme of work of the Forum further specifies that its monitoring, assessment and reporting function will be addressed at each of the Forum's sessions, as a common item.

6. Furthermore, the Forum will deal with "monitoring, assessment and reporting" and such related aspects as "concepts, terminology and definitions" and "criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management" as specific elements for deliberations at the sessions of the Forum. At its second session, the Forum will address the implementation of those IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the element of "concepts, terminology and definitions" and at its fourth session, the Forum will address "monitoring, assessment and reporting", "concepts, terminology and definitions" and "criteria and indicators".

7. Recognizing the complexity of monitoring, assessment and reporting, the Forum has agreed to establish an ad hoc expert group to develop approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting in the Forum. Its title, composition, terms of reference, scheduling and reporting will be elaborated during informal consultations preceding the second session of the Forum, and submitted to it for endorsement. The present report recognizes the importance of the ad hoc expert group in advancing the monitoring, assessment and reporting within the Forum, although it does not discuss in detail the future work of the group.[2]

3 The purpose of the present report is threefold:

(a) To report on the status of implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including concepts, terminology and definitions;

(b) To examine the three areas of the monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanism in the Fund (i.e., progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests and review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests);

(c) To provide suggestions for consideration by the Forum at its second session.

9. The present report was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close collaboration with the Forum secretariat and member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. It benefits from discussions held in the International Expert Meeting on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on the Progress towards Sustainable Forest Management, hosted by Japan at Yokohama from 5 to 8 November 2001 and co-sponsored by Australia, Brazil, Ghana, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway and the United States of America (see E/CN.18/2002/12).

Terminology and concepts used in the present document

10. The three meanings of monitoring, assessment and reporting, as used in the present report, are as follows:

(a) Monitoring involves periodic quantitative or qualitative measurements or observations of a specific parameter;

(b) Assessment involves analysis and synthesis of the monitoring data and observations;

(c) Reporting involves dissemination of the results of assessments.

11. Furthermore, the report distinguishes between IPF/IFF proposals for action and criteria and indicators, as different tools to promote sustainable forest management. IPF/IFF proposals for action are aimed at giving guidance on how to further develop, implement and coordinate policy-related actions at national, regional and global levels. They are targeted mainly at Governments, international organizations and private sector entities, as well as non-governme organizations. Criteria and indicators are tools for promoting, achieving and .eporting on progress towards sustainable forest management, mainly at the national level but also, increasingly, at the field-unit level.

II. Significance and purpose of monitoring, assessment and reporting

12. IPF/IFF recognized that monitoring, assessment and reporting by countries is primarily for their own benefit. However, there are regional and global dimensions of forests and a consequent need to obtain an overall picture of progress, as well as to identify opportunities for further action. Accordingly, there is a need to assess progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and towards

sustainable forest management at the national as well as at the regional and global levels. Hence, there is a need for a framework that would allow aggregation of information at these three levels.

13. Most countries are already engaged in monitoring, assessing and reporting the status of their forest resources and on the effectiveness of their forest policies. Countries also prepare reports, either voluntarily or as a requirement under international agreements, or in response to special requests from international organizations, such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) of FAO and the Commission on Sustainable Development, among others. IPF/IFF recognized the importance and usefulness of gathering data and reporting on forests. However, it was also noted that the requirements for reporting to various organizations and instruments needed to be made more consistent and streamlined, in order to reduce the reporting burden on countries.

14. It is important to stress that monitoring, assessment and reporting in any process is not an end in itself. As recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Agenda 21,[3] assessment and periodic evaluations are essential components of long-term planning, policy development and implementation. The primary goal of forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting is to facilitate informed decision-making on forest policy and management at all levels (i.e., sub-national, national, regional and global).

15. Reporting on the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action will assist countries to chart their progress and identify barriers to progress. Collectively, the country reports provide a basis for the Forum to assess the overall status of implementation. This, in turn, enables the Forum to identify gaps and needs, as well as new and emerging issues relevant to international cooperation, coordination and capacity-building, thus guiding its decision-making to further facilitate the achievement of sustainable forest management.

16. Monitoring, assessment and reporting within the Forum also provide guidance to the intersessional work of the Forum and its secretariat. Furthermore, public availability of national and other reports assists relevant actors (for example, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and other international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders) to define and carry out focused action to facilitate implementation.

17. In summary, the purposes of monitoring, assessment and reporting in the Forum include:

(a) To assess progress;

(b) To catalyse discussion, analysis and action within countries;

(c) To share experiences among countries and other stakeholders;

(d) To identify actions that could be taken at the national, regional and global levels;

(e) To clarify further the role of forests and their contribution to global environmental services and human well-being.

III. Progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting

18. The IPF/IFF proposals for action addressed a number of different aspects of monitoring, assessment and reporting and identified the need to:

(a) Develop a common understanding of concepts, terminology and definitions;[4]

(b) Strengthen national and international forest assessments;[5]

(c) Develop and implement criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and use them in international reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management;[6]

(d) Harmonize and streamline collection and analysis of data and reduce reporting burden;[7]

(e) Strengthen databases with timely and reliable information, and make them more available and accessible;[8]

(f) Assist developing countries in capacity-building for collection of data, analysis and reporting on forests.[9]

19. Significant progress has been made in the past five years on a number of activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting. These include FRA 2000, which incorporates a broader set of forest values than any of the previous assessments; measured use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including through nine international processes, involving some 150 countries; initiation of work on achieving a common understanding of concepts, terms and definitions; widening the scope of forest-related databases; and a number of projects in capacity-building. Most of these activities are carried out and facilitated by member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in particular FAO because it has a mandate to collect, analyse, process and disseminate data, information and knowledge on all aspects of forestry. The Framework of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests[10] describes, in greater detail, the ongoing and planned activities of the Partnership and its member organizations related to monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests.

20. The sections below provide a summary of the IPF/IFF proposals for action concerning monitoring, assessment and reporting and give an overview of the major related activities. Emphasis is given to concepts, terminology and definitions, since this is an element for deliberation at the second session of the Forum.

A. Concepts, terminology and definitions

21. Both IPF and IFF stressed the need to achieve a common international understanding of key forest-related concepts, terms and definitions, in order to facilitate the harmonization and streamlining of data and information requested by international organizations and instruments. Work towards this end is in progress, but needs to go further. This will require in particular active collaboration among the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. A summary of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to concepts, terminology and definitions are

summarized below in table 1. The table also indicates the status of the implementation.

Table 1
Summary of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to concepts, terminology and definitions, with indication of their status of implementation

Summarized proposals for action	*IPB/IFF paragraph reference*	*Status of implementation*
Forests resources assessments		
FAO to formulate an internationally acceptable set of definitions of key terms used in the assessment of all types of forests	IPF 89 (f)	Implemented (FRA 2000)
Criteria and indicators		
Countries, processes and international organizations, in particular FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to undertake efforts to achieve a common international understanding on concepts, essential terms and definitions used in criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management	IPF 109, 111, 115 (d)	In process
Trade		
Explore consistency of terminology used in certification	133 (d) (v)	In process
Definition of low forest cover		
Initially, IPF called upon FAO to develop a definition of low forest cover; later, IFF called upon UNEP, as the lead agency for this programme element (within the Interagency Task Force on Forests), to expedite the development of the definition	IPF 58 (a); IFF 5	Limited progress
Supply and demand		
Countries, including through international cooperation, to work towards an internationally agreed definition of planted forests	IFF 122 (a)	Implemented (FRA 2000)

22. The following initiatives have been taken concerning forest-related concepts, terms and definitions:

(a) FAO, in collaboration with the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) and other partners, developed a core set of harmonized definitions for forest and related aspects of forests for FRA 2000;

(b) An Expert Meeting on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders, organized by FAO, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), to be held at Rome from 23 to 25 January 2002, aims to start a process to review, improve and harmonize forest-related definitions, in particular biome-specific forest definitions, and for the terms forest degradation and devegetation. It is expected that the harmonization of definitions will prove to be of utmost importance to the forest and agriculture sectors, as well as in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification;

(c) A list of concepts and terms related to criteria and indicators was elaborated by FAO in collaboration with other partners in the process leading up to the Intergovernmental Seminar on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, held at Helsinki in 1996;

(d) In a number of forums, the relationship between criteria and indicators and certification has been discussed in order to clarify linkages and differences between them, including in terminology;

(e) FAO and IUFRO are collaborating in the development of a glossary of frequently used concepts and terms in the field of forest genetic resources, with a view to fostering common understanding;

(f) Work is ongoing by FAO and IUFRO on terminology related to forest biological diversity, non-wood forest products and climate change;

(g) The government-led initiative, International Meeting on Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover, organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran at Tehran in 1999, recommended that UNEP, in collaboration with IUFRO, further attempt to define low forest cover.

B. National and international forest assessments

23. FRA 2000 was completed in 2001. It provides up-to-date information on the extent and condition of the world's forest resources in 212 countries. The results of FRA 2000 are available on the FAO web site,[11] including the FRA 2000 main report, which was released in October 2001.

24. FRA 2000 was carried out by FAO in cooperation with its member countries, donors and partners, including, among others, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which acted as focal point for the assessment of forests of the industrialized temperate and boreal countries, and UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), which provided data for protected areas. FRA 2000 relied on the participation and provision of forest inventory information by countries.

25. There have been improvements in national forest inventories and assessments since FRA 1990, at which time many developing countries and countries with economies in transition had never carried out a national forest inventory. However, large information gaps remain in most countries, pointing to a critical need to improve inventory and assessment capabilities, especially in, but not limited to, developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

C. Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

26. IPF/IFF and the Forum have recognized criteria and indicators as an important tool for monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management, and have encouraged their use in reporting internationally on sustainable forest management.

27. Since 1992, nine international criteria and indicators processes have been launched. They involve approximately 150 countries[12] and cover most of the world's forested area. Countries are, however, in different stages of implementation. Many developing countries do not currently have the capacity to use criteria and indicators as a tool for monitoring and reporting, although they recognize their importance in promoting sustainable forest management. In some of the international processes, work is under way to develop a common reporting format; to use internationally accepted terms, concepts and definitions; and to report on progress towards sustainable forest management by individual countries and/or regionally, by the process.

28. FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), CIFOR and UNEP, together with other partners such as the African Timber Organization, IUFRO, the World Conservation Union and a number of other international organizations, including non-governmental organizations, support both the criteria and indicator processes and their country implementation. To assist the work of the Forum, FAO and ITTO will co-sponsor an International Conference on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, to be hosted by the Government of Guatemala at Guatemala City from 22 to 26 July 2002. The meeting will address the use of criteria and indicators as a tool for monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress in the Forum.

29. Linkages between FRAs and criteria and indicators have been established but they need to be further strengthened.

D. Harmonize approaches to data collection, analysis and reporting

30. One of the best examples to date of progress in streamlining data collection is the development of a single reporting format, the ITTO/ECE/FAO/EUROSTAT Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire, for collecting country data on the production, consumption and trade of forest products.

31. Work on harmonized approaches to reporting is also under way in the criteria and indicators processes. For example, ITTO, using its criteria and indicators, is developing, in collaboration with other processes, a format for reporting on assessing progress towards sustainable forest management, with a view also to facilitating the future work of the Forum.

32. Convention secretariats and other international organizations are working on harmonizing national reporting on biological diversity. This effort is carried out under the Environmental Management Group (a forum for United Nations agencies and the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements) and facilitated by UNEP and UNEP-WCMC. Efforts include a feasibility study for a harmonized information management infrastructure and pilot projects to test different approaches.

E. Databases

33. Forest-related databases are continuously being improved to contain, in addition to traditional forest data, information on other forest goods and services such as non-wood forest products, biological diversity, soil and water protection, carbon sequestration and sinks. Data and information on social, cultural and economic aspects, including financial flows and trade in the forest sector, are also being incorporated.

34. FAO maintains extensive databases on forests, based on the mandates given and requests made by the member countries. They include: FRA 2000; the FAO-Yearbook of Forest Products; and the Non-Wood Forest Products database. These and other forest-related data and information bases are available through a forestry information system, FORIS, which is a web-based tool to store and organize global forest information. Further examples of specific databases are: ITTO-Annual Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation; ECE/FAO-Timber Bulletin; UNEP-WCMC-Protected Areas database; and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiative on the sourcebook on Financing Sustainable Forest Management.

35. In addition, many conventions and instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Commission on Sustainable Development have reporting systems that provide information by countries on their implementation of the agreed actions. All of these databases and national reports are available on the web sites of respective organizations.

F. Capacity-building

36. Capacity-building for national data collection, analysis and reporting is particularly needed in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Greater coordination and partnership within countries and with international organizations and instruments are also important for periodic and timely collection, review, synthesis and utilization of forest-related information.

37. Activities to assist developing countries in building capacities to monitor, assess and report on forests are being undertaken in various fields. For example, FAO and the European Commission facilitate projects to strengthen national capacities to collect, analyse and produce improved information for policy-making in the forest sector in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and Latin America. Also, FAO has supported processes in the Near East, dry-zone Africa, Lepaterique and dry forests in Asia in the elaboration of practical guidelines for the use of criteria and indicators to assess and measure progress towards sustainable forest management. ITTO has funded 35 projects for the development of national forest statistical information

systems in 18 member countries. It has also conducted training and field-testing of the ITTO criteria and indicators as the basis and format for reporting on progress towards the ITTO Objective 2000.

IV. Monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanism in the Forum

38. The importance of monitoring, assessment and reporting in the Forum is evident in its mandate. Monitoring, assessment and reporting has been identified as a principal function, a common item, as well as an element of the Forum. In addition, the Forum will establish at its second session an ad hoc expert group on the approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

39. In order for the Forum to develop a mechanism for monitoring, assessment and reporting, it is important to review the mechanisms that already exist and to assess how they can contribute to a cohesive and comprehensive framework within the Forum. Furthermore, it is essential to clarify the three areas of monitoring, assessment and reporting within the Forum. The following sections provide an overview of existing data and reporting mechanisms and aim at examining the three areas of monitoring, assessment and reporting in the Forum.

A. Existing data and reporting mechanisms

40. Throughout the United Nations system and especially in the Economic and Social Council, there are growing concerns related to increasing and overlapping information requests from its subsidiary bodies. IPF/IFF and the Forum have also continuously called for further action to reduce the forest-related reporting burden on countries and to harmonize reporting requirements by international organizations and instruments.

41. It is therefore important to identify existing mechanisms, processes and reporting formats as well as data availability that may facilitate reporting to the Forum. Some of the well-established mechanisms that already provide periodic assessment and reporting on forests may be suitable for Forum purposes (see table 2). In addition to FRA 2000 and criteria and indicators frameworks, the database of the Commission on Sustainable Development is available on its web site[13] and currently includes information on forests from 95 countries. National forest reports were submitted to the Commission at its fifth session (1997), updated for the eighth session (2000) and again for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. For the eighth session of the Commission, countries were invited to report on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, which many are currently updating for the Summit.

Table 2
Databases and reporting mechanisms specifically related to forests that may help Forum reporting

Commission on Sustainable Development national information database (mainly descriptive information on policies)	*Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (quantitative and descriptive information on forest resources, management and policies)*	*FRA 2000 (data on condition of the world's forest resources)*
• Decision-making: institutional framework; strategies, policies, and programmes; legislation; and involvement of major groups • Generic status of the sector	• Extent of forest resources and global carbon cycle • Forest ecosystem health and vitality	• Forest area and change • Timber volume and forest biomass • Forest plantations
• Capacity-building: education, training and awareness-raising • Constraints • Technology • Information • Financing • International cooperation	• Biological diversity in forest ecosystems • Productive functions of forests • Protective functions of forests • Socio-economic functions and conditions • Policy legal and institutional frameworks	• Trees outside forests • Biological diversity and protected areas • Forest management • Forest fires • Wood supply and harvesting • Non-wood forest products
National forest information on 95 countries	Criteria and indicators processes involve some 150 countries. However, less than a half of them are using criteria and indicators for reporting on sustainable forest management	Data on 212 countries

B. Areas for monitoring, assessment and reporting in the Forum

42. At its first session, the Forum identified the following three areas for monitoring, assessment and reporting:

Area 1: Progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

Area 2: Progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests

Area 3: Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

Area 1: Implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

43. Also at the first session, the Forum invited countries, regions, organizations and processes to provide voluntary reports to the Forum on their progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

44. The assumption can be made that countries will report on the implementation of those IPF/IFF proposals for action that they identify as relevant to their particular circumstances.

45. Two options for the voluntary country reporting could be identified:

Option 1: Countries would report on their implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action to the second to fourth sessions of the Forum according to the elements of the session;

Option 2: Countries would report on the implementation of all relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action to only one of the Forum sessions, either the third or the fourth (according to their preference).

46. These options have different implications on the frequency and extent of reporting, as well as to the processing and synthesis of the information by the Forum secretariat in close collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Reporting format and guidelines

47. At its first session, the Forum noted that reporting on implementation should draw upon existing formats, include achievements, and identify gaps and obstacles. Countries may also wish to report on the way they are incorporating IPF/IFF proposals for action into their national forest policy and planning processes, and the impact implementation has made in their countries. It is suggested that the reporting format be flexible and allow countries to report according to the framework they use to evaluate implement the IPF/IPF proposals for action. In most countries the framework for implementation is their national forest programme, or another integrated programme relevant to forests.

48. The Forum also noted that the reports might be prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders and encouraged stakeholders to provide reports on their own contribution to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests will report to the Forum annually through the framework for its contribution to the work of the Forum.

49. It is suggested that the ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting may be requested to elaborate a reporting format, taking into account existing reporting formats, structures and mechanisms.

Area 2: Progress towards sustainable forest management

50. IPF, IFF and the Forum at its first session stressed the importance of using criteria and indicators as a basis for reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management.[14]

51. Efforts towards reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management are ongoing in many of the international criteria and indicators processes. It is therefore suggested that countries employ these existing frameworks to report on progress towards sustainable forest management. Those processes (ITTO, Montreal and Pan-European) that already report, or plan to report, may be invited to submit their report to the Forum at its fourth session. In addition, countries could also submit their individual reports on criteria and indicators at the fourth session.

52. Technical options for submitting, processing and disseminating the reports include the following:

(a) Submit the reports electronically, when possible, or by other means;

(b) Post the country and other reports on the Forum web site;

(c) As a long-term goal, consideration may be given to having countries themselves update the electronic databases and information to reduce the reporting burden;

(d) Based on the information provided by countries and other sources, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, could provide syntheses and analyses of trends (e.g., by eco-regions or geographic regions) in order to assist the Forum in assessing progress towards sustainable forest management.

Area 3: Effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

53. In its resolution 2000/35, the Economic and Social Council decided that the international arrangement on forests should be dynamic and adapt to evolving conditions and that the effectiveness of that arrangement should be reviewed in five years, and also decides that the five-year review of the arrangement should also address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system.

54. At its first session, the Forum identified the need to develop the means by which the effectiveness of the international arrangement could be systematically and objectively assessed. Accordingly, it decided that, if possible, it should at its second session consider and adopt criteria that would allow conclusions to be drawn, at the end of five years, on the extent to which the Forum had accomplished its mandate and objectives according to the principal functions and specific tasks outlined by the Economic and Social Council. As a separate but complementary exercise, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests would provide its own list of criteria against which its effectiveness will be assessed.[10]

55. Consistent with the foregoing, the Forum may wish to identify parameters to determine the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests by drawing on voluntary reports from countries and organizations and on other relevant sources of information that provide insights on the progress made in the six principal functions of the Forum:

(a) Facilitate and promote implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action:

(i) A description and assessment of the efforts undertaken by the Forum to facilitate and promote implementation of proposals and other initiatives by countries and organizations;

(ii) The amount of additional internal and external resources made available for implementation;

(iii) The extent to which additional technical and scientific resources have been made available to countries that requested assistance and met eligibility requirements of bilateral and multilateral donors and organizations;

(b) Provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue:

(i) The extent to which a common understanding of sustainable forest management is more widely accepted;

(ii) The extent to which the Forum has identified, addressed and resolved current and emerging issues;

(c) Enhance cooperation and policy and programme cooperation:

(i) The extent to which new partnership arrangements have been established, including among members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and with civil society;

(ii) The extent to which duplication and overlap have been avoided;

(d) Foster international cooperation:

The extent to which North-South and South-South, as well as public-private, partnerships have been established;

(e) Monitor and assess progress through reporting and consider future action:

(i) The extent to which countries and organizations respond to the call for voluntary reports on implementing sustainable forest management and IPF/IFF proposals for action;

(ii) The extent to which information from reports can be used to assess progress;

(iii) The relevance of proposed future action in relation to gaps identified;

(f) Strengthen political commitment:

(i) The extent to which outcomes of the ministerial segment of the Forum are action-oriented, identify opportunities to improve policy and are implemented;

(ii) The extent to which forest related outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development maintain and enhance the position of forests on the international political agenda and reflect a resolve to formulate and implement solutions to long-standing issues;

(iii) The extent to which governing bodies of multilateral and international organizations coordinate their efforts and assistance to the forest sector;

(g) Consider, with a view to recommending to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework:

Parameters developed and considered;

(h) Devise approaches to support financial and technology transfer:

Approaches devised.

V. Conclusions and suggestions for consideration by the Forum at its second session

56. Based on the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, and the overview on the current status of their implementation, the following objectives are identified that may be addressed by the Forum in its overall work on monitoring, assessment and reporting:

(a) Reduce the reporting burden on countries;

(b) Streamline/harmonize forest-related reporting requirement by international organizations and instruments (frequency, timing and contents of reporting);

(c) Achieve a common understanding of forest-related terms, concepts and definitions;

(d) Make monitoring, assessment and reporting more cost-effective, efficient and policy-relevant;

(e) Raise awareness of the existing data and reporting systems containing forest-related information;

(f) Increase accessibility and availability of data and information on forests, and in particular on financial resources and environmentally-sound technologies;

(g) Identify means and ways to disseminate meaningful policy-relevant information primarily to benefit countries and, secondly, the international community;

(h) Strengthen national capacities in forest-related information collection and reporting;

(i) Enhance involvement of multiple stakeholders in monitoring, assessment and reporting both at national as well as regional and global levels.

57. Further to the decisions taken at its first session, the Forum may wish to consider the following as components for decisions at its second session:

(a) To decide that, for monitoring and assessment of progress in the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action, the voluntary reports by countries and organizations be submitted as follows:

- Option 1: at each session, according to the elements of the session;
- Option 2: either at the third or the fourth session, as preferred, covering all IPF/IFF proposals for action relevant to each country's particular circumstances;
- Option 3: request the ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting to make a recommendation on the options mentioned above, in order for the Forum to take a decision on this matter at its third session.

(b) To invite countries and processes to report voluntarily, at the fourth session, on progress towards sustainable forest management by using criteria and indicators as a reporting framework and to request the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to facilitate the efforts by countries and processes to this end;

(c) To urge countries and organizations to submit voluntary reports sufficiently early to enable their timely processing before the sessions;

(d) To decide that it will review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests against its six principal functions;

(e) To request the Forum secretariat to provide an analysis and synthesis of reports prepared by countries and organizations to facilitate the Forum's work on assessment of progress, and in particular the review of effectiveness at its fifth session, and to post all reports on its web site;

(f) To recall paragraph 9 (b) of its resolution 1/3,[15] and to urge the Partnership to strengthen its efforts to achieve a common understanding of forest-related terms, concepts and definitions, and to report on its progress to the Forum at its fourth session;

(g) To recall paragraph 9 (c) of its resolution 1/3,[15] in which it invited the Partnership and its member organizations to reduce duplication in reporting requirements, and to invite the Partnership to form a task force to streamline and harmonize forest-related reporting requirements by its member organizations taking into account frequency, timing and contents of reporting, and to invite the Partnership to report to the Forum on the progress of its work, initially at the third session and substantially at the fifth session;

(h) To invite the Partnership to carry out a comprehensive study, including gaps and overlaps, on the existing forest-related data and reporting sources to assist the Forum and its ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting;

(i) To recall paragraph 9 (d) of its resolution 1/3,[15] and to welcome the Partnership's initiative on the sourcebook on Financing Sustainable Forest Management, to urge the Partnership to develop further the sourcebook and to make it available and accessible through the Internet, and to invite the Partnership to present the sourcebook to the Forum at its third session;

(j) To recall paragraph 9 (e) of its resolution 1/3,[15] and to request the members of the Partnership to strengthen their collaboration at the national level to assist countries in building capacities for forest-related information collection and reporting, with a view to making monitoring, assessment and reporting more cost-effective, efficient and relevant to decision-making;

(k) To encourage countries participating in the international criteria and indicators processes to strengthen their efforts further to develop, implement and use criteria and indicators as frameworks for monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 22* (E/2001/42/Rev.1), chap. I, sect. B, resolution I/1, para. 12.

[2] A note by the Forum secretariat, based on suggestions provided to it, will be distributed at the informal consultation.

[3] See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[4] IPF paras. 89 (f) and (g); 109; 111; 115 (d); 115 (e). IFF paras. 10; 14; 68. Definition of low forest cover countries. IPF para. 53.

[5] IPF paras. 81; 83; 85-86; 88, 89 (a), (d) and (e). IFF para. 10.

[6] IPF para. 115 (a)-(f). IFF para. 19 (a).

[7] IPF paras. 81-82; 84. IFF paras. 11; 14; 17 (a) and (b); 19 (a).

[8] IPF paras. 80; 112; 138. IFF para. 85 (g).

[9] IPF paras. 84; 89 (b). IFF paras. 12-13; 17 (a) and (e); 19 (b).

[10] Collaborative Partnership on Forests. January 2002. Framework for contribution of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to the work of the Forum.

[11] www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra/index.jsp.

[12] See www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra/index tables.jsp, table 9 (forest management) for a list of countries.

[13] www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/agenda21/issue/natur.htm#forest.

[14] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 22* (E/2001/42/Rev.1), part two, chap. I, sect. B, resolution 1/1, para. 11.

[15] Ibid., resolution 1/3.